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Miss Philips in the Character of Mandane.



Let not Rage thy Bosom firing.

Act III. Sc. 5.

Printed by Harrifon & C^o Jan. 1. 1781.

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ARTAXERXES.

AN

ENGLISH OPERA.

As it is Acted at the

THEATRES - ROYAL

IN

Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden.

By Dr. ARNE.

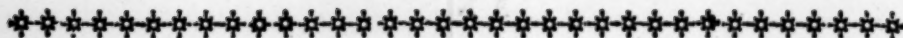


L O N D O N;

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M DCC LXXX.

ARTAXERXES



Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

ARTAXERXES, Prince, and afterwards King of Persia, Friend to Arbaces, and in love with Semira.

ARTABANES, Generalissimo, and Favourite of the Royal Family; Father to Arbaces and Semira.

ARBACES, Friend of Artaxerxes, in love with Mandane.

RIMÈNES, a General of the Army, and Confident of Artabanes.



MANDANE, Sister to Artaxerxes, in love with Arbaces.

SEMIRA, Sister to Arbaces, in love with Artaxerxes.

Nobles, Guards and Attendants.



Printed for HARRISON and CO. by J. WILKINSON, 10, New Street, London.

ARTAXERXES.

ACT I. SCENE I.

An inner Garden belonging to the Palace of the King of Persia. Moonlight.

Mandane and Arbaces.

Man. **S**TILL silence reigns around, suspicion sleeps,

And unperceiv'd, you may escape these walls.

Arb. Adieu, my love; O think on thy Arbaces.

Man. Yet stay, sweet youth; a few short minutes stay.

Arb. Ador'd Mandane! see the dawn appears.

DUETTINO.

Fair Aurora, pry'thee, stay;

O retard unwelcome day;

Think what anguish rends my breast;

Thus caressing, thus caress;

From the idol of my heart,

Forc'd at thy approach to part.

Arb. Alas, thou know'st that, for my love to thee,

The king, great Xerxes, thy too rigid father,
Has banish'd me the palace; shou'd he know,
That, in defiance of his stern command,
I have presum'd to scale this garden-wall;
How little wou'd a lover's plea avail, [pity?

When thou, his daughter, cou'dst not move his

Man. Thy noble father, mighty Artabanes,

Disposes at his will the heart of Xerxes;

And the young prince my brother, Artaxerxes,

Brought up with thee in virtuous emulation,

Honours thy worth, and boasts thy valu'd friendship;

Their interest may soften his resentment.

Arb. Weak are their efforts, while his kingly pride

Disdains to rank a princess with a subject.

Man. My spirits sink, my heart forgets to beat,

I have not fortitude to bear thy loss—

And must we part?—Then all good angels guard thee!

Air.

Adieu, thou lovely youth;

Let hope thy fears remove;

Preserve thy faith and truth,

But never doubt my love. [Exit.

SCENE II.

Arb. O cruel parting! How can I survive?

Divided thus from all that's sweet and fair,

From her, for whom alone I live!

Enter Artabanes.

Artab. Son, Arbaces.

Arb. My father!

Artab. Give me thy sword.

Arb. Sir, I obey.

Artab. Here take thou mine.

Arb. 'Tis drench'd in blood!

Artab. Fly, hide it from all eyes;

Xerxes, the king, this daring arm hath slain.

Arb. Forbid it, Heaven!

Artab. O much-lov'd son!

Thy treatment was the spur to my revenge—

For thee I'm guilty.

Arb. Wou'd I had ne'er been born.

Artab. Let not weak scruples thwart my great
Perhaps Arbaces shall be king of Persia. [design;

Arb. I'm all confusion—

Artab. No more—begone.

Arb. O fatal day!—Unhappy, lost Arbaces!

Air.

Amid a thousand racking woes,

I pant, I tremble, and I feel

Cold blood from ev'ry vein distil,

And clog my lab'ring heart.

SCENE III.

Artabanes solus.

Be firm my heart. In the pursuit of guilt,

The first advance admits not a retreat:

The royal blood, to the last hateful drop,

Must then be shed. Conscience, thy checks are
vain—

The prince appears—now art's my only refuge.

Enter Artaxerxes, Rimenes, and Guards.

Art. Dear Artabanes, glad I meet thee here;

Thy prince demands thy counsel,

Thy royalty—Revenge—

Artab. I tremble, Sir—

This dire injunction wants an explanation.

Art. Disastrous fate—Yonder my father lies
Savagely murder'd!

Artab. Ah! my ill-boding fears!

Unsated thirst of empire!

Alas! will nothing but a father's blood

Allay thy heat, and quench thy raging fever!

Art. Well I conceive—my faithless, cruel bro-
ther—Darius—

Artab. Who, but he, at dead of night, could
penetrate

The palace? Who approach the royal bed?

Nay more, his known ambition—

Art. O, if here lives a heart that calls me friend

Or feels compassion for his slaughter'd king,

Quick let him bring the traitor to our presence.

Artab. That welcome task be mine—

Guards, follow me. [Going?

Art. Yet stay—

Darius is the son of Xerxes.

Artab. Who kills the father, is no more a son;

Air.

Behold! on Lethe's dismal strand

Thy father's troubled spirit stand!

In his face what grief profound!

See he rolls his haggard eyes;

Hark! Revenge! Revenge! he cries;

And points to his still bleeding wound;

Obey the call, revenge his death,

And calm his soul that gave thee breath. [Exit.

ARTAXERXES.

SCENE IV.

Artaxerxes going. Enter Semira.

Sem. Stay, Artaxerxes, stay.

Art. Adieu, Semira.

[prince,

Sem. And dost thou fly me? Go then, cruel
No more shall ill-tim'd fondness importune thee.

Art. Beautiful Semira, should I longer stay,
There's such a tyrannous sweetness in thy voice,
'T would lull me to forget my filial duty.

Sem. Away, ungrateful.

AIR.

Art. Fair Semira, lovely maid,
Cease in pity to upbraid
My oppress'd but constant heart:
My sufficient are the woes,
Which my cruel stars impose;
Heaven; alas! has done it's part. [Exit.

SCENE V.

Sem. I fear some dread disaster—Say, Rimenes,
What means this strange confusion in the prince?

Rim. Xerxes is slain—

Suspicion points the finger at Darius:
And Artaxerxes bears a dreadful conflict,
'Twixt filial duty to revenge his father,
And brotherly compassion for Darius.

Sem. O fatal deed! th' effect of wild ambition;
Heav'n knows if Artaxerxes' life be safe.

Rim. Let fate be busy in destructive slaughter;
We, blest with love, and seated on the shore,
Will view the destin'd shipwreck. [enter,

Sem. Think not that love can find a place to
When the sad heart's surrounded with misfortunes;
Leave me, Rimenes, to my troubled thoughts.

Rim. Your web of scorn is not so closely woven,
But I can see between each subtle thread;
Yet, born to love, undaunted I'll pursue thee:
Since hope inspires my breast, what you deny,
Ungrateful maid! kind fancy shall supply.

AIR.

When real joy we miss,
'Tis some degree of bliss,
To enjoy ideal pleasure;
And dream of hidden treasure.
The soldier dreams of wars,
And conquers without scars;
The sailor in his sleep,
With safety ploughs the deep:
So I, thro' fancy's aid,
Enjoy my heav'nly maid,
And blest with thee and love,
Am greater far than Jove.

SCENE VI.

Semira sola.

Ye gods, protectors of the Persian empire,
Preserve my Artaxerxes—Yet if he be blest—
Semira's state is wretched: Xerxes dead,
This prince will mount the throne:
Belov'd by me, and rais'd above my hopes,
The hand which he intreated when a subject,
When sovereign of Persia he'll disdain.

AIR.

How hard is my fate,
How desperate my state,
When virtue and honour excite,
To suffer distress,
Contented to blest,
The object in whom I delight.
Yet, midst all the woes
My soul undergoes,
Thro' virtue's too rigid decree;
I'll scorn to complain,
If the force of my pain
Awakens his pity for me.

SCENE VII. The Palace.

Enter Mandane.

Where do I fly?—Ah, hapless maid!—

Thus in one fatal instant,
To lose a brother, father, and a lover!

Enter Artaxerxes.

Art. Alas, Mandane!

Man. Does Darius live?

Or are thy guilty hands
Imbrued in brother's blood?

Art. Fain would I shun that deed,
Which to prevent, I've search'd throughout the pa-
For Artabanes and Darius— [place
But all in vain—

Man. See, Artabanes comes.

SCENE VIII.

Enter Artabanes.

Art. My friend!

Artab. I fought you, Sir—All is accomplish'd.

Art. Ha! speak, explain.

Artab. Your father's death's reveng'd,
Darius slain, and Artaxerxes now
Is Persia's king.

Art. Oh, gods!

Man. Oh, dire misfortune!

Artab. Why that deep sigh, my liege? 'Twas your
command.

Art. Alas! 'tis true, the guilt is only mine.

Artab. What guilt, my sovereign?
'Twas merely justice to your murder'd father.
Take comfort, Sir;
And think, that, in Darius' death,
A wicked, bloody parricide is punish'd.

SCENE IX.

Enter Semira.

Sem. Oh, Artaxerxes!

Art. Say, fair Semira, why this seeming joy?

Sem. Darius is not guilty of the murder.

Man. What do I hear!

Art. I'm struck with double horror!

Sem. Th' assassin is secur'd.

Art. O quick, proceed.

Sem. Your watchful centinels, when he had leap'd
The garden-wall, o'ertook him as he fled.
His deep confusion, palid countenance,
And sword yet reeking with the crimson blood,
Strongly proclaim him guilty.

Art. But the name?

Sem. At my request to know it

All hang their heads in silence.

Artab. Alas, it is my son!

[Aside.

Art. Must Artaxerxes then ascend the throne,
Disdain'd with brother's blood?

Oh, I shall never taste of peace again.
Quick, bring this traitor; that unbounded rage
May execute the vengeance he deserves.—

Hold, Artabanes, dear Mandane, stay.

Semira, leave me not in this distress.—

Where is my friend Arbaces?

Artab. He was forbid the court by royal Xerxes,
For his presumptuous love of fair Mandane.

Art. Fly, bring him to my arms—I here ab-
solve him.

SCENE X.

Enter Rimenes with Arbaces Prisoner.

Rim. Who in this royal presence would believe
Arbaces to be guilty?

Artab. How!

Art. My friend!

Artab. My son!

Sem. My brother!

Blas. Oh, ye gods! my lover!

[Exit.

Art. Wou'd in the pangs of death I'd met my
Rather than thus in fetters like a traitor! [*friend,*
Art. I'm innocent.

Art. O make but that appear,
And doubly 'twill endear thee to my love.

Art. I am not guilty, that's my only plea.

Artab. This prudent caution answers to my wish.
[*Aside.*

Man. But your repentment 'gainst the king—
Art. Was just.

Art. Didst thou not fly?

Art. I did.

Man. This thy reserve—

Art. Is requisite.

Art. And thy down-cast confusion—

Art. Is suited to th' occasion.

Rim. This bloody sword— [*Shewing it.*

Art. Was in the scabbard, when you took me
prisoner.

Art. And canst thou yet deny the cruel deed?

Art. Great Sir, I still assert my innocence.

Artab. Audacious boy! thus obstinate in ill,
Thy fight's my torment, and this deed my shame.

Art. And does my father join in my destruction!

Air.

Artab. Thy father! away, I renounce the soft claim!
Thou spot on my honour, thou blast to my
fame.

Let justice the traitor to punishment bring;
His father he lost, when he murder'd his
king. [*Exit.*

SCENE XI.

Art. Ye cruel gods, what crime have I committed
To draw relentless vengeance on my head?
Semira! sister! hear me with compassion.

Air.

Sem. Acquit thee of this foul offence,
Return with spotless innocence;
Then shall my hapless brother see,
That never sister lov'd like me. [*Exit.*

SCENE XII.

Art. Appearance, I must own, is strong against
But truth is on my side—I'm innocent. [*me;*

Art. Pray Heav'n thou may'st; but till the law
decide,

You must remain a prisoner. [*Exit.*

Art. Ah, dear Rimenes, pity my hard fate—

My friend?

Rim. I am no traitor's friend—Adieu. [*Exit.*

SCENE XIII.

Art. Beauteous Mandane, turn at least and hear
me.

Man. Away! you sue in vain. [*Going.*

Art. O stay, I charge thee—
Think on thy former love.

Man. 'Tis turn'd to hate.

Art. And you believe me guilty?

Man. I am convinc'd.

Air.

Art. O too lovely, too unkind,
If my lips no credit find,
Pierce my breast; my heart shall prove
Strong in virtue, firm in love.
Guiltless, wretched, left forlorn,
And worse than murder'd by thy scorn.

[*Exit guarded.*

SCENE XIV.

Mandane sola.

Recitative accompanied.

Dear and beloved shade of my dead father,
Thou I invoke to spirit up my rage,
Lest fond credulity too strongly plead,
And turn my purpose from a just revenge;

For, O! I feel the tyrant Love within,
He rends my breast, he struggles for Arbaces;
Help me, kind gods, to tear away his image.

Air.

Fly, soft ideas, fly;

That neither tear nor sigh.

My virtue may betray.

Nature's great call,

That governs all,

A daughter must obey.

Alas, my soul denies

To hear revenge's cries!

Dare not, fond heart,

To take his part,

But drive his form away. [*Exit.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

The Royal Apartments.

Enter Artaxerxes and Artabanes.

Art. **G**UARDS, speed ye to the tower,
And instantly conduct Arbaces to me.

Artab. Good my lord,
Think not the partial fondness of a father
Has urged this counsel.

Art. No; 'tis justice dictates;
He still persists that he is innocent,
And his fair truth was ne'er till now suspected;
I will withdraw—
O, reconcile the safety of your son
With your king's peace, and the honour of his throne.

Air.

In infancy, our hopes and fears
Were to each other known;
And friendship, in our riper years,
Has twin'd our hearts in one.
O clear him then from this offence;
Thy love, thy duty prove;
Restore him with that innocence,
Which first inspir'd my loves. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Artab. So far my great resolve succeeds.
Approach, Arbaces.

Enter Arbaces and Guards.

And you, his guards, in the next chamber wait.
[*Exit Guards.*

Art. My father!

Artab. Ever watchful to preserve thee,
I artfully have gain'd from Artaxerxes
The liberty to question thee:
Take then this fortunate occasion,
And, by a secret way, which I will shew thee,
Delude the guards, and fly.

Art. Sir, my escape
Wou'd rise in evidence to prove me guilty.

Artab. 'Tis folly all; I give thee liberty;
From the king's wrath I snatch thee; and, perhaps,
The public voice shall call thee to the throne.

Art. What said you, Sir?

Artab. Long have you known
The people's hatred to the royal blood:
Away.

The sight of you will fire the mutinous troops,
Whose leaders to your interest are sworn.

Art. I turn a rebel! horror's in the thought—
Your pardon, Sir.—Is this a father's counsel?
Guards, enter quick, bring me again my chains—
Conduct me to my prison.

Artab. I burn with rage.

Art. Yet calm this transport—think on my af-
fliction.

Sir—father—turn—O grant one kind adieu.

Artab. Unworthy boy! I'm deaf to thy request.

Air.

Art. Disdainful you fly me,
In anger exclaim;
All comfort deny me,
And murder my fame.
No grief can the heart
To pity incline,
That bears not a part
In sorrow like mine.
Nature's tender plea is vain;
Welcome then my chains again.
O rigour unjust!
O council accurst!
Ambition ill plac'd,
My virtue disgrac'd;
The pains I endure,
Death only can cure.
Disdainful you fly me,
In anger exclaim;
All comfort deny me,
And murder my fame.
No grief can the heart
To pity incline,
That bears not a part
In sorrow like mine.
Nature's tender plea is vain;
Welcome then my chains again.

[Exit, with the Guards.]

SCENE III.

Enter Rimenes.

Rim. Why, my dear friend, so pensive, so inactive?

Artab. My wayward son, that bar to my ambition,
At once rejects both liberty and crown.

Rim. Let us away, and force him from the Tower.

Artab. The present time may better be employ'd,
If Artaxerxes perish by our hands—
Let not my friend betray me.

Rim. I, my lord!

Forbid it gratitude! My abject state
Cast me below the notice of mankind,
Till your great power exalted me to honour.

Artab. Small recompence for thy good services:
But should kind fortune smile on this attempt,
Then judge if Artabanes loves his friend.

Rim. My hand, my heart, are guided by your will.

Artab. I have observ'd thy passion for Semira—
Spare thy confusion; and let this great instance
Prove my esteem—Semira shall be thine.

Rim. Thanks, gracious Sir; my joy is past expression.

Artab. Come hither, daughter. [Seeing Semira.]

SCENE IV.

Enter Semira.

In this valiant chief
Behold thy lord and husband!

Sem. Cruel sound!

O Sir, reflect—Is this a time for nuptials?

When my unhappy brother—

Artab. Peace, no more.

'Tis my command—reply not, but obey. [Exit.]

SCENE V.

Sem. I tremble—hear me, Sir—O, if you love
Prevent this marriage. [me,

Rim. Sure Semira mocks me.

Sem. Tho', by constraint, you seize my helpless
My heart disdains the brutal violence. [hand,

Rim. Give me thy beauty, and reserve thy heart;
Thou keep'st the worst, I gain the better part.

Air.

To sigh and complain,
Alike I disdain,

Contented my wish to enjoy;

I scorn to reflect,

On a lady's neglect,

Or barter my peace for a toy.

In love, as in war,

I laugh at a scar,

And, if my proud enemy yield,

The joy that remains

Is to lead her in chains,

And glean the rich spoils of the field. [Exit.]

SCENE VI.

Sem. How many links to dire misfortune's chain
Are woven in one day!

Enter MANDANE.

Stay, dear Mandane—

Why this haste?

Man. I attend the council.

Sem. I'll too attend, if ought within my power
May help my brother.

Man. Our views are different; thou desir'st to
save him;

I seek his death.

Sem. Is this a language for Arbaces' lover?

Man. It well becomes the daughter of dead Xerxes.

Sem. Away, thou cruel maid!

Enforce his crime, and urge his speedy death.

But first prepare your heart, and quite erase

The soft remembrance of your former passion,

The tender hopes and fears, warm vows of truth,

Fond sighs exchang'd, and, last, the sweet idea

Of that dear form, which first inspir'd your love.

Man. Ah, barbarous Semira! thus to wake
My guilty pity; rebel to my duty.

Air.

If o'er the cruel tyrant love,

A conquest I believ'd;

The flatt'ring error cease to prove;

O let me be deceiv'd.

Forbear to fan the gentle flame,

Which love did first create;

What was my pride is now my shame,

And must be turn'd to hate.

Then call not to my wav'ring mind,

The weakness of my heart:

Which, ah! I feel too much inclin'd

To take the traitor's part. [Exit.]

SCENE VII.

SEMIRA, sola.

Which fatal evil shall I first oppose!

My princess, brother, this detested lover,

The king, my father, all are enemies;

And each attacks me in some tender part;

While I exert my pow'r against the one,

The others rush on my defenceless breast.

Air.

If the river's swelling waves

Overflow their usual bed;

Scarce th' affrighted peasant saves

From the flood his homely shed.

Tho' he stop one open shore,

Where the waters swiftly glide,

At an hundred places more,

Rushes in th' impetuous tide. [Exit.]

SCENE VIII.

*A ball of royal council, with a throne, seats on the
sides for the grandees of the kingdom, a small table
and chair on the right hand of the throne. Ar-
taxerxes preceded by guards, afterwards by the
nobles, followed by Mandane, Semira, Artabanes
and Rimenes.*

Art. Ye solid pillars of the Persian empire,
Behold me fated to sustain the cares

Of my paternal throne; and much I'm griev'd
That my lov'd father's death so heavy lies
Upon my absent friend; but since Arbaces
Denies this accusation, let the father,
Whose virtues have endear'd him to our favour,
Be the son's judge, to cast him or acquit him:
In him is vested all our regal power.

Man. In him! does friendship so prevail o'er duty?

Art. Not so, Mandane, for his loyal father
Has double reason for severity.
I ought to vindicate the death of Xerxes;
But if Arbaces be the criminal,
His father, with more rigour, will revenge.
His monarch's death, and his own public shame.

Artab. Ah, Sir, what trial!—

Art. Worthy of thy virtue—

If any think me partial, let him speak.

Rim. This silence is a gen'ral approbation.

Sem. My brother comes.

Man. Ah me!

Art. Give your attention.

[*Ascends the throne, the grandees sit.*]

Man. [*Aside.*] Now prudence guide the reins of
my affliction.

Cease, busy heart, to flutter in my breast.

SCENE IX.

Enter Arbaces, in Chains, guarded.

Art. Am I so much the hatred of all Persia,
That it unites to witness my misfortune?
My sovereign!

Art. O Arbaces, call me friend!
For till thy crime is prov'd, that title's mine;
But, as a name so tender ill becomes
Th' impartial judge, thy most unhappy cause
I have assign'd to worthy Artabanes.

Art. My father judge!

Art. Yes he.

Art. I'm chill'd with horror.

Artab. Arbaces, in this presence thou appear'st
To be the murderer of royal Xerxes.

The circumstances urg'd are these—
That thou hadst entertain'd presumptuous love
Of this most honour'd prince;
For which, by Xerxes banish'd from the court,
You sought revenge, and found it in his death.

Art. Nay more, the bloody sword, the time,
the place,

And flight, conspire to fix the guilt on me;

And yet my heart is free;—I'm innocent.

Artab. Demonstrate that, and so appease the
wrath,

Of this offended prince.

Man. Whether he plead or not,
He equally is guilty.—Where is justice?

Is this the father that should vindicate
His murder'd king, and his own publick shame?

Art. Cruel Mandane! does thy voice condemn
me?

Man. Bear up, my heart.

[*Aside.*]

Artab. Your just resentment, prince's,
Spurs on my lazy virtue.—

Let Persia then, in Artabanes' rigour,
Record his justice and his loyalty.—[*Takes the pen.*]
My son I here condemn.—[*Signs.*] Arbaces dies.

Man. Oh, gods!

Art. Suspend a while, the rash decree.

[*Artabanes rises, and gives the paper to Artaxerxes.*]

Artab. 'Tis sign'd, my liege—I have fulfil'd my
duty.

Art. Unnatural sentence!

Sem. O inhuman father!

Man. Alas, my tears betray me.

Art. Weeps Mandane

In pity of my cruel destiny?

Man. Pleasure may start a tear, as well as grief.

Artab. Now I have finish'd the stern judge's part,
Permit, O king, the feeling of a father:

Pardon, my son, the effect of tyrant duty;

Suffer with patience, and remember this,

The worst of ev'ry evil is the fear.

Art. My patience, Sir, begins at last to leave
me:

Barbarous father,—(Ah, I lose my life!)

Adieu.—

[*Going.*]

Artab. I freeze.

[*Aside.*]

Man. I die.

Art. Stay, rash Arbaces!

[*Returning.*]

Where would'st thou go? Ah, Sir, forgive your
son!

Behold me at your feet—

Excuse the transports of my frantick grief;

Shed all my blood, 'tis yours,—I'll not complain;

But kiss the honour'd hand that sign'd my death.

Artab. Enough, O rise.

Thou hast but too much reason to lament:

But know—(O gods!—) Take one em-
brace, and part.

AIR.

Art. By that belov'd embrace,

By this my fond adieu,

Deplore my hapless case,

Condemn'd alas! for you.

Appease my love, my truth commend,

Yourself preserve, my king defend.

My sentence I obey.

To filial duty true;

And scarce have pow'r to say

A long and last adieu! [*Exit guarded.*]

SCENE X.

Man. Ah me! at poor Arbaces' parting,
I feel the stroke of death.

Artab. I hope Mandane's wrath will now subside;
For I have sacrific'd my only son,
To satisfy her vengeance.

Man. Savage, no more—

Avoid my presence: dare not to view the light
Of sun or stars! but hide thy cruel head

Within the deepest bowels of the earth.

Artab. Is then my virtue—

Man. Silence, inhuman!

Artab. Did not Mandane's rage excite my justice?

Man. The daughter ought to vindicate the father;
But thou, a father, should'st have sav'd thy son.

AIR.

Monster away!

From cheerful day,

To the gloomy desert fly:

Paths explore,

Where lions roar,

And devouring tigers lie.

Tho' for food

They wade in blood,

All to fave their young agree;

Ev'ry creature,

Fierce by nature,

Harmless is compar'd to thee.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE XI.

Art. See, lov'd Semira,

How Heav'n conspires the ruin of Arbaces.

Sem. Inhuman tyrant!

You first destroy your friend,

And then bewail him.

Art. I, to thy father's will, his life committed;

How was I then a tyrant?

All Persia knows my friendship for Arbaces,
And faithful love to thee.

Sem. I thought you once
A tender lover and a gen'rous friend ;
But in one instant you have prov'd yourself
In friendship false, and treacherous in love.

Air.

This bosom, a stranger to rest,
Resentment and pity assail ;
As both for dominion contest,
So both to my sorrow, prevail :
My heart in this desperate state,
To give each assailant it's due,
Now bleeds for my brother's hard fate,
And burns with resentment to you. *[Exit.]*

SCENE XII.

Art. O, Artabanes !

[me ;

Artab. Lament not, Sir, but leave complaints to
I am the most unhappy of mankind.

Art. Thy woe must needs be great,
When mine is insupportable. *[Exit.]*

SCENE XIII.

Artabanes solus.

Recitative accompanied.

At length my soul has room to indulge its grief---
What racking thoughts surround the guilty breast---
O my dear son, forgive the piercing woes,
Which my foul deeds inflict upon thy youth ;
I come to save thee from the jaws of death,
And pay thy virtues with a kingly throne.

Air.

Thou, like the glorious sun,
Thy splendid course shalt run :
What tho' the night,
Obscure his light,
When prison'd in the west ;
The day returns,
Again he burns,
The god of day confess. *[Exit.]*

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Prison.

Arbaces, in a melancholy posture.

ARIETTA.

WHY is death for ever late
To conclude a wretch's woe ?
Those who live in happy state,
Feel too soon th' untimely blow.

Enter Artaxerxes.

Art. Arbaces !

Art. Gracious Heav'n, what's this I see !
Does royal Artaxerxes deign to visit
The wretch Arbaces, in this horrid gloom !

Art. Pity and friendship brought me here to save

Art. To save me !

[thee.]

Art. Yes. That secret passage leads
To life and liberty ; then quickly fly---
Remember Artaxerxes, and be happy. *[guilty ;*
Art. Your pardon, Sir, the world esteems me
Then let me die ; your honour, Sir requires it.
Happy my exit, having once preserv'd
My sovereign's life, and now his spotless honour.

Art. Such noble sentiments can ne'er proceed
From guilty minds.---Belov'd Arbaces, fly---
As friend, I beg thee to preserve thyself ;
But if that fails---as sovereign, I command thee.

Art. In gratitude to thy exalted friendship,
I'll quit this scene of horror and despair.
But oh ! thus exil'd, I shall only fly,
Reckless to tread the paths of misery.

Air.

Water parted from the sea,
May increase the river's tide ;
To the bubbling fount may flee,
Or thro' fertile vallies glide :
Yet in search of lost repose,
Doom'd like me, forlorn to roam,
Still it murmurs as it flows,
Till it reach its native home. *[Exit.]*

SCENE II.

Artaxerxes solus.

That front, secure in conscious innocence,
Defies the charge of guilt : affliction's veil
Can never quite eclipse the inward light,
That from a noble soul darts forth it's rays,
When in the countenance the heart is seen.

Air.

Tho' oft a cloud, with envious shade
Conceals the face of day ;
The sun is still in flames array'd,
His beams immortal, not decay'd :
Soon the gloomy veil retires ;
He darts each pow'ful ray,
And light and heat expires. *[Exit.]*

SCENE III.

Enter Artabanes, with a train of conspirators.

My son Arbaces---Where art thou retir'd ?---
Sure he should guard my voice---what ho---Arbaces !---
O Heaven---guards, watch the entrance of the
prison,

Till I can find my son. *[Exit.]*

Enter Rimenes.

Rim. Not yet arriv'd !
Sir, Artabanes ! *[Exit.]*

Re-enter Artabanes.

Artab. O unhappy father !
My son I seek in vain---my blood grows chill ;
I fear---I doubt---perhaps in---
Re-enter Rimenes.

Rim. Artabanes !

Artab. Where is Arbaces ?

Rim. Is he not with you ? *[Exit.]*

Artab. O cruel gods ! th' unfortunate has pe-

Rim. Suspicion always borders on extremes ;

And might not Artaxerxes or Mandane,
The friend or lover, have procur'd this flight ?
What strange delay is this !---Let's to our task :
Behold the way that leads us to the palace.

Artab. And what great enterprize shall I accom-
My son being lost ? *[Exit.]*

Rim. What, have you then, for nought,
Secur'd the royal guards ; and I, the troops ?
Determine, Sir ; this instant Artaxerxes
Prepares to take the coronation oath ;
The sacred cup is by your order poison'd :
And shall we then so basely---
Artab. O my friend !

Arbaces lost, for whom shou'd I engage ?

Rim. Thy son Arbaces from thy hand expects
The throne, if living ; and if dead, revenge.

Artab. That, that alone recalls my fleeting spirit ;
Lead on, kind friend ; my fate depends on thee.

Rim. I'll lead thee on to joyful victory.

Air.

O let the danger of a son
Excite vindictive ire ;
The prospect of a kingdom won
Should light ambition's fire.
To wounded minds, revenge is balm ;
With vigour they engage,

And sacrifice a pleasing calm,
To a more pleasing rage.

SCENE IV.

Astaban's solus.

RECITATIVE accompanied.

Ye adverse Gods I y've found the only way
To quell my vast ambition; perplexing doubt,
Whether my son yet lives, awakens fear;
And the dire image of despair starts up,
Unnerves my arm, and checks my daring soul.

AIR.

O much lov'd son, if death
Has stol'n thy vital breath,
I'll share thy hapless fate;
But ere the dagger drinks my blood,
A murder'd king, at Lethe's flood,
The tidings shall relate.
Bid Charon cease from toll,
And rest upon his oar,
Till I attain the happy soil,
Where we shall part no more.

SCENE V.

Mandane's apartment.

Enter Mandane and Semira.

Man. Perhaps the king releas'd Arbaces.

Sem. No—rather destroyed him.

Man. How!

Sem. 'Tis known to all;
In secret he resign'd his wretched life.

Man. O hapless youth! O tidings worse than death!

Sem. I hope your vengeance now is satisfy'd—
Or wou'd you other victims?—Speak.

Man. I cannot;
Light cares are ever soften'd by complaint;
But such as mine, arrest the pow'r of speech.

Sem. Ne'er liv'd a heart more lost to sense of pity:
All eyes in Persia wail his hapless fate;
But yours are dry.

Man. The deeper my affliction:
Small is the grief that vents itself in tears.

Sem. Go, if not satisfy'd, and feast your eyes
Upon the slaughter'd spoils of my dear brother;
With secret joy, number his bloody wounds.

Man. Be silent—leave me.

Sem. Never; while thou liv'st,
I'll haunt thee like a spirit, and my wrongs
Shall dash thy hopes with bitterness and woe.

Man. You think me cruel, and denounce re-
venge—Ah! how have I deserv'd thy enmity?

AIR.

Let not rage, thy bosom firing,
Pity's softer claim remove;
Spare a heart that's just expiring,
Forc'd by duty, rack'd by love.
Each ungentle thought suspending,
Judge of mine, by thy soft breast;
Nor with rancour, never ending,
Heap fresh sorrows on th' oppress'd.
Let not rage, thy bosom firing,
Pity's softer claim remove;
Spare a heart that's now expiring,
Forc'd by duty, rack'd by love.
Heav'n, that every joy has cross'd,
Ne'er my wretched state can mend;
I, alas! at once have lost,
Father, brother, lover, friend!
Let not rage, &c.

SCENE VI.

Semira sola.

What have I done! Alas, I vainly thought,
Dividing grief, to lessen my affliction;
These cruel insults, vented on Mandane,

Have pierc'd her breast, and not reliev'd my own.

AIR.

'Tis not true, that in our grief,
Others weeping in distress,
To our troubles bring relief,
Making each misfortune less.
No, when sore oppress'd by fate,
Better 'tis to sigh alone,
Than support a double weight,
Others sorrows, and our own.

SCENE VII.

Enter Arbaces.

Arb. Nor here my searching eyes can find Man-
Fain wou'd my heart before external exile, [dane.
Indulge it's fondness with a last adieu.

Perhaps, this way—but whither do I wander!

Rash man—O heav'nly Pow'rs behold her there!

My spirits fail me—yet I'll speak—Mandane!

Enter Mandane.

Man. Ye pow'rs! Arbaces! and at liberty!

Arb. A friendly hand unlock'd my cruel fetters.

Man. Ah! fly begone!

Arb. How can I part, for ever from such beauty?

Man. Perfidious traitor! what wou'd'st thou
with me?

Arb. Am I no longer dear to my Mandane?

Man. Thou art become the object of my hate.

Arb. Barbarous maid! my death shall end thy
scorn.

I fly to meet my fate—Adieu—for ever. [Going.

Man. Hear me, Arbaces.

Arb. Ha! what torture more?

Man. I cannot speak.

Arb. O Heav'n!

Man. Fly, save thyself.

Arb. What means my princess!—this return-
ing pity—

Man. Does not arise from love—but fly—
and live.

DUETTO.

Arb. For thee I live, my dearest;

But if I meet disdain,

For thee, my dear, I'll die.

Man. How lovely thou appearest,

My blushes will explain.

I can no more reply.

Arb. Then hear me.

Man. No.

Arb. Thou art—

Man. Divide not thus my heart;

Leave me—In pity go.

Both. Ye Gods that torture so,

Some timely respite send;

When will your rigour end?

[Exeunt, different ways.]

SCENE VIII.

*A temp'e, and throne, with a crown and sceptre;
the image of the sun, with a lighted Altar.*

Artaxerxes, Artabanes, nobles, &c.

Art. To you, my people, much belov'd, I offer
Myself, not less a father, than a king;

Your native rights, your customs, and your laws,

With jealous care I ever will maintain,

And raise up treasure in my people's hearts.

Artab. Here is the sacred cup—

Your solemn oath must bind the lasting tie;

Fulfil th' accusom'd rites—and drink thy death.

[Aside,

RECITATIVE accompanied.

Art. Resplendent God, by whom sweet April
blooms,

Thou genial beam, that warms us and enlightens,
Look awful down; and if my treach'rous lips

Have utter'd falsehood, may this wholesome draught
Change, as it passes, into deadly poison.

SCENE IX.

Enter Semira hastily.

Sem. Fly quick, my liege; thousands of rebel
troops

Surround the palace, by Rimenès led;
Your death is plotted, and your guards corrupted.

Art. O gods!

Hrtab. What fear you, Sir? My single presence
Shall quell this tumult, and protect my king.

Art. Away, my friend, to victory or death.

SCENE X.

Enter Mandane.

Man. Hold, brother, the rebellious crew are fled.

Art. Say how, Mandane?

Man. Led by false Rimenès.

They forc'd the gates, and enter'd, when Arbaces,
Departing to eternal banishment,

His single breast oppos'd, and swore to die

In his great master's cause: all dropp'd their arms
Except that daring rebel at their head;

On him Arbaces, like a lion, flew,

Clove thro' his helmet, slew him, and reveng'd
thee.

Art. Where's my preserver—bring him to my
arms. [*Exeunt officers with guards.*]

He murder Xerxes! Impious supposition!

Man. My heart respites!

Sem. O loyal brother!

Man. Valour suppress'd, now springs again to
glory.

AIR.

The soldier, tir'd of war's alarms,

Forfears the clang of hostile arms,

And scorns the spear and shield:

But if the brazen trumpet sound,

He burns with conquest to be crown'd,

And dares again the field.

SCENE the last.

Enter Artabanes and Arbaces.

Art. Behold, my king, Arbaces at thy feet.

Art. O still my friend! come to my grateful
breast.

Man. Yet that my brother may with better grace
Reward this deed, and satisfy the people,

Some reason give us for the bloody sword,

Thy tim'rous flight, and all that wak'd suspicion.

Art. If deeds, not words, proclaim a loyal heart,
Permit me to be silent—I am innocent.

Art. Confirm with a solemn imprecation,

And of a truth, as Persia's law prescribes,
That vessel drain'd shall be the sacred pledge.

Art. I am prepar'd.

Art. O cruel gods! if my son drinks, he's poison'd.

RECITATIVE accompanied.

Art. Resplendent god, by whom sweet April
blooms,

Thou genial beam that warms us and enlightens!

Artab. [*Aside.*] O wretched father!

Art. If my treacherous lips,

Have utter'd falsehood, may this wholesome draught
Change, as it passes, into—

Artab. Hold, 'tis poison.

Art. What fury urg'd thee to so vile a deed?

Artab. Away disguise! the draught was meant
But my paternal fondness has betray'd me. [*for thee;*
I murder'd Xerxes; and, to gain the throne,
Wou'd have destroy'd thee too.

Art. Wretch, thou shalt die.

Art. Then I disdain to live.

Art. Mandane shall reward thy spotless virtue;
And thy fair sister shall partake our throne:

But for that traitor—

Art. I will die for him:

My blood is his, and shall atone his crimes.

Art. Thy loyalty and virtue, injur'd youth,
Shall change his sentence into banishment:

Make no reply, his exile is for life.

Man. Sure Heav'n inspir'd the merciful decree;

Arbaces and Semira must approve it:

Tho' for his crimes the father justly suffers,
His life is spar'd, that you, his guiltless children,

May not be ever wretched in his death.

CHORUS.

Live to us, to empire live!

Great Augustus, long may'st thou

From the subject world receive

Laurel wreathes t'adorn thy brow!

DUETTO.

Of his country ever free,

There the royal father see!

CHORUS.

To the patron of our laws,

Pierce the air with loud applause.

DUETTO.

Virtue in his soul resides;

In his truth the world confides.

CHORUS.

To the patron of our laws,

Pierce the air with loud applause.

DUETTO.

Pity from the throne descending,

How the monarch it endears;

When with justice mercy blending,

In the king a god appears!

DUETTO.

Tyrants claim, with iron sceptre,

Duty which our fears impart;

But our gentle kind protector,

Monarch reigns o'er ev'ry heart.

CHORUS.

Live to us, to empire live!

Great Augustus, long may'st thou

From the subject world receive

Laurel wreathes t'adorn thy brow!

